

The Labyrinth of the Soul: Wagner's Musical Lament

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Resumo

Não obstante o dito espirituoso que mais livros se escreveram sobre Richard Wagner do que qualquer outra pessoa, excepto Jesus Cristo e Napoleão Bonaparte, aventurar-me-ei a navegar no mar alto. Este ensaio é a primeira parte de uma trilogia dedicada ao *Tristão* de Wagner – um lamento musical; de facto, a pedra angular da arte modern(ist)a. Tomando como ponto de partida a interrogação reflexiva de Eduardo Lourenço sobre música tão poderosa, ‘Por que mistério?’, examiná-la-ei de novo sob ângulos diferentes. O texto completo – literário, teórico e analítico – entrelaça música e linguagem: ‘Música *na* linguagem’ explora preliminarmente as qualidades sonoras, sensoriais e artísticas, da palavra. ‘A linguagem *da* música’, a seguir, propõe uma gramática da música tonal, compreendida no panorama mais amplo da evolução da consciência ocidental. ‘Música *como* linguagem’, por fim, oferece uma nova perspectiva do processo músico-poético de Wagner: aí procuro desvendar essa ânsia (*Sehnen*) tão peculiar do chamado ‘acorde de Tristão’, que reverbera ao longo do drama, e como ele se converte na transfiguração beatífica de Isolda. Só a primeira parte, literária, será aqui presente. Vultos significativos da cultura literária são convocadas a propósito dessoutra experiência anímica portuguesa de nostalgia – por conseguinte, indizível noutra língua – a que chamam *saudade*. Oferece-se então uma panorâmica comparativa do equilíbrio instável entre música e linguagem ao longo do tempo, que suscita a questão fundamental da verdade artística: seja ela criativa ou reflexiva, trata-se de um tipo de harmonia ou consonância com a realidade, que implica perspectivas diferentes e vozes multifárias.

Palavras-passe

Sehnsucht e *saudade*; Sentimento romântico; Dissonância musical; Voz poética; Verdade artística.

Abstract

In spite of the witty saying that more books have been written about Richard Wagner than anyone else except Jesus Christ and Napoleon Bonaparte, I will venture to sail into the high seas. This essay is the first installment of a trilogy devoted to Wagner's *Tristan*—a musical lament, indeed the cornerstone of modern(ist) art. Taking my cue from Eduardo Lourenço's self-questioning remark on such powerful music, ‘By what mysterious means?’, I shall examine it anew, trying different tacks. The complete text—literary, theoretical and analytical—weaves through music and language. ‘Music *in* language’ is a preliminary attempt to explore sensual, artistic sound qualities in the word. ‘The language *of* music’, then, puts forward a grammar for tonal music as it may be sensed in a wider panorama of the evolving Western consciousness. ‘Music *as* language’, eventually, offers a novel approach to Wagner's musico-poetic process: I thus seek to unravel that distinctive longing (*Sehnen*) of the so-called ‘Tristan chord’, resonating throughout the drama, and how it turns into Isolde's blissful transfiguration. Only the first, literary part will be presented here. Significant figures of literary culture are summoned up with regard to

that otherwise Portuguese soul experience of nostalgic longing—hence untranslatable—they call *saudade*. A broad, comparative survey of the shifting balance over time between music and language is then offered, which begs the fundamental question of artistic truth: either creative or reflective, it is a sort of harmony or consonance with reality, entailing different perspectives and multifarious voices.

Keywords

Sehnsucht and *saudade*; Romantic feeling; Musical dissonance; Poetic voice; Artistic truth.

*Rita Gorr canta a morte de Tristão
e tudo quanto Arte significa se instala em nós,
nos invade como o mar de nós mesmos [...]. Por que mistério?*

[Rita Gorr sings the death of Tristan
and all that Art signifies settles in us,
invades us like the sea of ourselves [...]. By what mysterious means?] ¹

EDUARDO LOURENÇO'S INFLUENTIAL BOOK *The Labyrinth of Saudade: Mythical Psychoanalysis of Portuguese Fate* is, as he admits, 'a critical discourse on the images that we [Portuguese] have been forging about ourselves'.² Written in the wake of the 1974 military coup and the ensuing democratic revolution, this is an analysis of the nation's psyche purposely coming at a major crossroads of change, when the nearly half-millenary empire—the Portuguese Overseas, indeed the first global empire in history—was suddenly dissolving. In a fast changing political-social-cultural environment feverish with excitement, this could not have come at a more appropriate time to help reevaluate and redefine the Portuguese cultural self. By focusing on that mysteriously nostalgic mode of consciousness we have called 'saudade' ever since the Renaissance—thus coeval with the Age of Discovery, as the navigational feats expanded in unprecedented ways the West's cultural and geographical horizons—Lourenço's work inscribes itself in the lineage of a long, unbroken tradition of deep critical and philosophical reflection on this ingrained core value of our (Portuguese) national identity.

Labyrinthine, too, is the route, both philological and etymological, by which scholars have traveled to determine the origin of that Portuguese word—*saudade*—one which raises the most difficult problems.³ Likely derived from Latin root in the feminine plural *solitates* ('solitudes'), following a consensual majority, it was possibly influenced also by the idea and sonority of *salutate* ('health'), thus conveying a peculiar bittersweet feeling. Akin to the Castilian *soledad*, its linguistic

¹ Eduardo LOURENÇO, 'Wagner, *Tristão*, Março de 1960', in *Tempo da música, música do tempo*, organization and preface by Barbara Aniello (Lisboa, Gradiva, 2012), p. 134.

² Eduardo LOURENÇO, *O labirinto da saudade: Psicanálise mítica do destino português* (Lisboa, Publicações Dom Quixote, 1978), p. 18.

³ See Maria Teresa de NORONHA, *A saudade: Contribuições fenomenológicas, lógicas e ontológicas* (Lisboa, Imprensa Nacional - Casa da Moeda, 2007), pp. 51-90.

geography or habitat is clearly defined by the western strip of the Iberian Peninsula, gloriously sung by our eminent poets: Spain, 'the head, as it were, of all Europe' (Camões); Portugal, staring 'with a fatal, sphinxian gaze at the West, the future of the past' (Pessoa).⁴ Yet another possible origin could have been the Arabic *saudá* ('melancholy sadness'), thus entangling its descent with the foggy memory of the Portuguese musical genre Fado, the popular mournful voice of Saudade.⁵ Melancholy, like music, is a peculiar consciousness of time. Other nations know that nostalgic longing, to be sure, most particularly the Germans' *Sehnsucht*—an affective cognate and younger sibling—so keenly and movingly expressed in Goethe's character of Mignon, that mysterious persona, whose songs were widely set in music (thousands) by Romantic composers. Yet no full correspondence has been found to that otherwise Portuguese soul experience filled with ineffable longing and gentle grief, an innermost cultural idiosyncrasy—hence the untranslatability of *saudade*.⁶

Perhaps the experience of that inner divide (or dissonance) is even more acute and self-conscious at a distance, not only in time but in space, for someone living in a foreign land—exiled (*heimatlose*) like Mignon. It has been expressed in the best Portuguese literature by towering poetic figures such as Camões and Pessoa. Symptomatically, Lourenço's continuing critical quest to grasp the nation's self-image (which he terms 'imagology') has been conducted mostly *extra muros*, and that novel outsider's perspective certainly accounted for (on an autobiographical tone) the strong impact his work had on my early years abroad: he was then in Nice; I was in Paris. The workings of remoteness and memory—that is, perceiving from afar and into the past—deeply permeate and powerfully resonate in our soul, especially if imbued with a romantic, longing sensibility—'that infinite longing [*unendliche Sehnsucht*] that is the essence of romanticism', as expressed by E.T.A. Hoffmann in lapidary terms.⁷ We may just recall Goethe's elusive world of the *Entfernte*, both imaginary and real, which had a major impact on contemporary musical composition, say,

⁴ Luís Vaz de CAMÕES, *The Lusiads*, translated by Landeg White (Oxford, Oxford University Press [1997], 2001), p. 51, canto III, stanza 17. Fernando PESSOA, *Message*, part I, 'Coat of Arms: The Castles', in *Fernando Pessoa [1906-35]: A Little Larger Than the Entire Universe – Selected Poems*, edited and translated by Richard Zenith (New York, Penguin Books, 2006), p. 371. Only after I had written this essay was it brought to my attention (fortunate coincidence) that Pessoa's *Mensagem* has been aptly characterized as 'a tonal lament', in a brand-new critical work by António M. FEIJÓ, *Uma admiração pastoril pelo diabo* (Lisboa, Imprensa Nacional - Casa da Moeda, 2015), p. 137.

⁵ See João RIBEIRO, *Curiosidades verbais: Estudos aplicáveis à língua nacional* (Rio de Janeiro, Academia Brasileira de Letras - Biblioteca Nacional, 2008³) pp. 172-5. Also, Leonardo da SILVEIRA, 'Para além da origem da palavra (ou antropologia de um sentimento coletivo)', *Litteris*, 4 (March 2010).

⁶ For a comparative assessment of the Portuguese and German cultural constructs, see Delfina de Araújo MADUREIRA, *Sehnsucht e Saudade: Para uma história comparada do pathos* (Ph.D. dissertation, Universidade do Minho, 2008). Also, *Filosofia da saudade*, selection and organization by Afonso BOTELHO and António Braz TEIXEIRA (Lisboa, Imprensa Nacional - Casa da Moeda, 1986).

⁷ Ernst Theodor Amadeus HOFFMANN, 'Beethoven's Instrumental Music' [1813], in *E.T.A. Hoffmann's Musical Writings: Kreisleriana, The Poet and the Composer, Music Criticism*, edited by David Charlton, translated by Martin Clarke (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 98.

Beethoven's song cycle *An die ferne Geliebte* (To the Distant Beloved) of 1816, or Schubert's *An die Entfernte* (To the Distant Lover) of 1822.

Now, we could try a different tack and reverse altogether the subject's standpoint, for the sake of a fuller perspective, presenting a foreign bard's first-hand impression of such an intimate, solitary experience of *saudade*. Let us hear Mircea Eliade's vivid wartime depiction of the year 1941, when he was assigned a diplomatic post in Lisbon:

Nowhere, in any country, have I heard a cry more melancholy, more heartrending, than that of the grinder man in Lisbon. This craftsman has the habit of announcing his passing on the streets by blowing notes of infinite sorrow on a short reed pipe: long, lingering notes, suddenly ending in a sharp, piercing cry, like that of a wounded songbird. The grinder pipes most despairingly on hot afternoons, when the sun puts the great trees to sleep and a glassy vapor hovers over the pavement. It is as though he were the last man alive, passing in sorrow through a deserted city. And again I hear him toward the sunset, when the air recovers its transparency and the trees begin to exude their fragrances. It is, undoubtedly, the most consummate expression of *saudade*.⁸

Here we have the utterance of a humble craftsman treading the streets of the city, whose calls are expressed with poignant nuances of feeling, a purely musical experience that appears to reveal the true nature of his soul. It seems as if this one people's unique sense of the tragic has been spread everywhere, infusing everything with its peculiar *Stimmung*, the natural environment where music lives and breathes. How different is this sound from the mechanical organ grinder of Schubert's *Der Leiermann* (The Hurdy-Gurdy Man) in 1827 Vienna, bringing to a deadly end his ultimate song cycle, *Winterreise*!

Music is truly 'invasive', to borrow the felicitous expression in the epigraph, and we feel helpless before its power. It has a greater and much more direct impact on us than any other art, as major nineteenth-century philosophers like Schopenhauer (the will), Kierkegaard (the sensuous-erotic) or Nietzsche (the Dionysian) well knew. Its immediacy addresses primarily the human realm of feeling, the dynamics of our primordial inner world, bypassing any linguistic, intellectual concept: no abstract, theoretical construct is necessary for us to *understand* it. Such is the mysterious power of *Tristan*—a musical lament—referred to also in exergue, which I will seek to decipher, paying a sincere tribute—a musical offering—to the author honored here. Wagner's conception of the opera *Tristan und Isolde* actually took place abroad, in political exile, shortly after his conspicuous revolutionary involvement with Bakunin in the Dresden uprising of 1849. Now,

⁸ Mircea ELIADE, *The Portugal Journal*, translated by Mac Linscott Ricketts (Albany - N.Y., SUNY Press, 2010), p. 239.

more than a religious or literary *topos* (Greek for 'a commonplace') which is experienced anew, I shall take the age-old tragic lament—expressed in utter dissonance—to be a poetic and musical *logos*: a divine reason immanent in human nature, the human spirit in artistic consciousness, one feeling in actual art music capable of revealing the truth. Thus we shall approach *Tristan*, the cornerstone of modernity in art, under the epigraphic motto 'by what means?'

The following essay is the first installment of a trilogy devoted to Wagner's *Tristan*— literary, theoretical and analytical—weaving through music and language. 'Music *in* language' is a preliminary attempt to explore sensual, artistic sound qualities in the word. 'The language *of* music', then, puts forward a grammar for tonal music as it may be sensed in a wider panorama of the evolving Western consciousness. 'Music *as* language', eventually, offers a novel approach to Wagner's musico-poetic process: it is meant to unravel the distinctive *Sehnen* of the opening (the so-called 'Tristan') chord, resonating throughout the drama, and how it turns into Isolde's blissful transfiguration. Only the first (literary) part, however, will be presented here.

Music *in* Language

The sounds of speech—that is what makes us humans, what distinguishes us from all the living creatures around us. Something was breathed into the animal form, bringing forth the sounds of speech, which raised that animal form to the level of the human form. Those are permeated with the meaning of our thought, the sounds our mouth utters, thereby turning them into words.

Life and light, purpose and meaning radiate from the primordial creative Word, according to the prologue of St. John's Gospel: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God'. But can we fathom the real significance of the words written by the Evangelist? 'One need only read the first verses', proclaims Georg Kühlewind at the outset of his fine study, 'to realize that the text is incomprehensible, even contradictory, to our everyday dialectical consciousness'. Both the use of linguistic terms referring to 'experiences that are most unknown to contemporary man' and 'a kind of experience having to do with the cognition of hidden spheres of reality' are the reasons provided by the author, who then concludes: 'Texts like St John's can only be understood through experiences on the plane of consciousness corresponding to them. [...] Philology, by itself, however, can rarely do justice to the text'.⁹ A one-sided linguistic approach is therefore insufficient, according to the author, whose avowed aim is to describe the two pillars of John's teaching, truth (*alétheia*) and grace (*cháris*).

⁹ Georg KÜHLEWIND, *Becoming Aware of the Logos: The Way of St. John the Evangelist*, translated by Friedmann Schwarzkopf (Great Barrington - M.A., The Lindisfarne Press, 1985), p. 11.

Nor can we understand, *a fortiori*, the true significance of the tremendous opening words of the Bible, the all-powerful primal Word so intimately connected with the later events in Palestine: ‘In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. [...] Then God said, “Let there be light”, and there was light’. Such is the revelation of the beginning of the world’s evolution and the existence of humankind, as the divine Spirit intones the creative Word through the world. The experience of God’s creative thinking could hardly be translated into the languages of the physical world, as Rudolf Steiner thoroughly investigates, for that is not a portrayal of things and events having to do with the external world of sense perceptions:

In fact, with regard to this particular document, the least possible importance attaches to finding the equivalent modern words to put in the place of the ancient ones; and it is far more important that we prepare ourselves [...] to feel at least something of the mood which lived in the hearts and minds of ancient Hebrew scholars when they brought to life within themselves the words: *B’reshit bara elohim et hashamayim v’et ha’aretz*.¹⁰

This Word, disseminated in space and permeating it like a musical tone, is the vibrant source of life; it *is* life. And the sounds of that primordial speech create an inner feeling in the Hebrew sage, the author then explains, crystallizing into pictures in his mind’s eye:

[T]heir secret lies in the fact that they are written in the Hebrew tongue, a language which works upon the soul quite differently than any other modern language can. Although the Hebrew of these early chapters may not work in the same way today, it did at one time have the effect that when a letter was sounded it called up a picture in the soul. [...] Therefore if we want to reach in some measure a living picture of these powerful primordial words it is essential to forgo all the pale and shadowy impressions which any modern language can have on us and get an idea of the tremendously alive, creatively stimulating power inherent in any of the sound sequences in this ancient tongue.¹¹

Similar experiences of tones as form-making, imbued with an original divine will and emanating from religious cult, not only sounds, would be expressed in virtually all of the ancient religions and seem to disclose a thoroughly objective language. In the cosmogony of the Vedas

¹⁰ Rudolf STEINER, *Genesis: Secrets of Creation* [1910], translated by Pauline Wehrle (Forest Row, Rudolf Steiner Press, 2002), p. 1.

¹¹ STEINER, *Genesis* (see note 10), p. 3.

(meaning 'knowledge' in Sanskrit), for instance, some of the oldest extant scriptures, the inaudible cosmic Sound (AUM) is considered to be the basic natural force, the origin and cause of all matter in the universe—a divine vibratory power, energy and consciousness which the audible tone (language *and* music) would somehow contain. Indeed, those sacred hymns were primarily intended not to be read and studied, but intoned and sung. The primordial Word (or Logos) was at the same time sound and meaning, music and measure. In ancient Greece, quite symptomatically, 'logos' still designated the measure used in the fretted lute to determine the precise pressing points on the strings in order to produce the different pitches. In the beginning was thus an undifferentiated *Sprechgesang*, sounding from the original divine 'darkness'.¹²

Language and music likely originated from religious cult, having then separated: language became information, music became art. They were still symbiotically related in ancient Greek poetry, as Thrasybulos Georgiades explains:

For the ancient Greeks, music existed primarily as verse. The Greek verse line was a linguistic and simultaneously a musical reality. The connecting element, common to both language and music, was rhythm. [...] Here [in ancient Greek, unlike a modern language, say, German] the musical rhythm was contained within the language itself. The musical-rhythmic structure was completely determined by the language. There was no room for an independent musical-rhythmic setting; nothing could be added or changed. The ancient Greek word comprised within itself a firm musical component. It had an intrinsic musical will.¹³

This characteristic quantitative rhythm of Greek antiquity, an intrinsic filled-in time, was therefore determined by language—which, in turn, possessed an essential musical *will*. 'The verse line did not contain even the rudiments of a systematic arrangement of accents', as the author assesses comparatively; 'it thus lacked the prerequisite to the formation of the verse of modern Western languages'. In such an outlook of the ancients, *musiké* was the special term used for that singular vehicle of meaning. He then concludes:

Musiké cannot be translated; and yet the world lives on to the present time in its Western transformation as *music*, it is on everyone's tongue: and so it is that the etymological identity points to the origin of our music, to the unity of antique and Western civilization, to the intellectual-

¹² See Georg KÜHLEWIND, 'Musical Consciousness', in *Thinking of the Heart and Other Essays*, edited and translated by Friedmann Schwarzkopf (Fair Oaks - C.A., Rudolf Steiner College Press, 1987), pp. 81-8, at p. 81.

¹³ Thrasybulos GEORGIADES, *Music and Language: The Rise of Western Music as Exemplified in Settings of the Mass*, translated by Marie Louise Göllner (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 4.

cultural continuity from Homer to the present day. The change in meaning, however, points to the gulf which separates the two worlds. [...]

From the original unity has resulted a duality; from *μουσική* has emerged poetry and music.¹⁴

The concept, again, is untranslatable, whereas its linguistic transposition betrays a telling (and ever-changing) semantic modulation. By the same token, as the shifting balance between word and tone lies at the heart of the history of Western music, their common roots ensure the whole forming a single ‘intellectual-cultural’ entity.

If music separated from mathematics in the late Italian Renaissance to join the poetic expression of the linguistic model—a fundamental change in attitude toward the essence of music promoted by the new humanist program—it would separate from language in early German Romanticism (a spiritual renaissance) to seek the metaphysical *infinity*, or the Absolute, of religious import. Both the conception and treatment of dissonance were paramount in those pivotal moments. The latter split, however, did allow for a momentous reunion of language and music, made possible by the shifting attitudes toward, or parallel developments in, both of them: independent, self-sufficient systems, they were to seek an ideal fusion—that is the cornerstone of early Romantic aesthetics. Whatever its alliance or elective affinity was to develop, either the mathematical disciplines of the *quadrivium* or the literary disciplines of the *trivium*, scientific thinking or poetic feeling, sensuous pleasure or ethical significance, music has always avowed to seek the *truth*. Here we find that dual, ambivalent understanding of the concept of *logos* (Latin *ratio*), quantitative and qualitative, as two distinct modes of expressing the intelligibility of the world: it means number and proportion (ratio) as much as word and speech (reason), mathematical and grammatical thinking. Distinctive of the rational, logical dimension brought forth by the advent of Greek philosophical thought, in opposition to its earlier mythic stage, the human *logos* now allows us to connect otherwise the intelligible and the sensible worlds. Such is the Orphic calling of music—to redeem inert matter, the mineral substance, and make it resonate in harmony as a musical instrument, thus speaking the language of the gods.

The idea that music was the original human language, the first speech of mankind, was standard for the Romantic generation of composers born, like Wagner, around 1810. Never since ancient Greece had music enjoyed (and neither has it ever since) that prestigious status in the realm of the arts, as the poetic language *par excellence*, whose ideal means was pure instrumental music—the new *ars perfecta* of the age and abstract model for thought—coupled with the avant-

¹⁴ GEORGIADIS, *Music and Language* (see note 13), pp. 5-7.

garde aesthetics of self-expression. 'Absolute music' was actually Wagner's 1846 term to coin such a radical form of instrumental (abstract) autonomy, inherited from Beethoven's symphonies, only to be overcome by his revolutionary aesthetics of musical drama, combining music with word and deed. The question of the origin and evolution of language unfolded with the rise of modern science in the seventeenth century. Its champion in the French Enlightenment was Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who performed with equal aplomb in the fields of language (as writer or philosopher) and music (composer or theorist), claiming the primacy *by nature* of song, or melody, whence language descended: the former voices the passions of the soul, the latter expresses the ideas of reason. His moral sensibility would argue vehemently for the primacy of melodic consciousness over harmonic reckoning as represented by Rameau, and through their renewed *querelle des anciens et des modernes* rings once again the dual nature of the musical logos, its identity, at the same time quantitative and qualitative, scientific and humanistic. 'The irony of Rousseau's thought', as Daniel Chua perceptively observes, 'is that its concepts were more fully realized by the Germans in their instrumental music than the French [or the Italians, the actual model for Rousseau] in their vocal music'.¹⁵

Then, a flurry of wild, speculative theories in the nineteenth century (including Darwin's) would lead the Linguistic Society of Paris in 1866 to bar from its sessions the presentation on the topic of the origin of language. Between divine origin and evolutionary development, gestural or vocal in nature, there seems to be renewed interest nowadays (including in music), even though based on quite different grounds. Most recently, for instance, Leon Perlovsky proposed 'a synthesis of cognitive science and mathematical models of the mind [...] describing a fundamental role of music in the functioning and evolution of the mind, consciousness, and cultures'.¹⁶ While claiming, once again, that we perceive music before we perceive speech, and that emotions and concepts have separated in human beings over time, he asserts the principle that music plays a crucial role in the evolution of consciousness.

Critical for our discussion of this elusive question and ongoing debate is Rousseau's emphasis on humanity's innate morality as embodied in sound, with a myriad of meaningful, subtle inflections. He thus describes the first (natural) language in his *Essay on the Origins of Languages* of ca. 1754-61, then specifies its moral effects:

¹⁵ Daniel K. L. CHUA, *Absolute Music and the Construction of Meaning* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 103-4.

¹⁶ Leon PERLOVSKY, 'Musical Emotions: Functions, Origins, Evolution', *Physics of Life Reviews*, 7 (2010), pp. 2-27, at the Abstract page.

It would have many irregularities and anomalies, it would neglect grammatical analogy to stick to the euphony, number, harmony, and beauty of sounds. Instead of arguments it would have aphorisms; it would persuade without convincing, and depict without reason. [...]

The sounds of a melody do not act on us solely as sounds, but as signs of our affections, of our feelings; it is in this way that they excite in us the emotions they express and the image of which we recognize in them.¹⁷

The sensuous qualities of sound, actual sonority as well as rhythm and tempo, are indeed musical elements of human speech. As the objects of our complete aural attention, presented to a single sense modality, they help us focus on understanding a linguistic utterance and enhance its significance. Such was the purpose of the original *acousmatic* experience of Pythagoras' disciples, who would quietly listen to his words, though not see him, as if it were the voice of God. It also points directly to an age-old priority of sound over writing in language, a natural transparency of the speaker's feelings and greater closeness to his radiating presence, in our Western tradition: that is the 'phonocentric' assumption endorsed by Rousseau ('Feelings are conveyed when one speaks and ideas when one writes') and offset by Derrida ('The formal essence of the signified is *presence*, and the privilege of its proximity to the logos as *phonè* [voice] is the privilege of presence').¹⁸ Now, if we learn to unite ourselves with that aural presence through recollection, conjuring up the feelings directly experienced and letting them pass again through our mind and soul in remembrance—such is my approach in *meditative listening*¹⁹—we will place ourselves more powerfully and consciously in connection with the music that endures and is still present even without the sounding material. How revealing seems, then, in the light of that *intangible* presence, the biographic conditions under which some utterly novel compositions have been brought forth! Having so completely absorbed the sense of hearing into their own creative musical thought, Beethoven wrote his last string quartets while he was deaf (with the inner ear), and Bach dictated his unfinished *The Art of Fugue* while he was blind (with the mind's eye)—gifts, incidentally, which Mozart seems to have been born with.

Unlike music, however, which is inevitably bound to the sound material, language can also be adequately objectified in visual material (writing) alone. That is why French philologist Jean-François Champollion was able to decipher the Rosetta hieroglyphs and offer us a translation of the

¹⁷ Jean-Jacques ROUSSEAU, *Essay on the Origin of Languages and Writings Related to Music. The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, translated and edited by John T. Scott, vol. 7 (Dartmouth College, Hanover, N.E., The University Press of New England, 1998), chapter 4, p. 296; chapter 15, pp. 323-4.

¹⁸ ROUSSEAU, *Essay on the Origin of Languages* (see note 17), chapter 5, p. 300. Jacques DERRIDA, *On Grammatology*, translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), p. 18.

¹⁹ See Miguel RIBEIRO-PEREIRA, 'Ciências da mente e arte da música: Notas (em *staccato legato*) sobre a atenção', *Cadernos de Teoria das Artes* (Porto, Universidade Católica Editora, 2012), pp. 43-72, at pp. 68-70.

dead Egyptian language, while we cannot resurrect a dead musical repertory, say, that of ancient Greece, even knowing its theoretical system but with no inkling of just how it sounded. Starting from this unique characteristic of the linguistic medium's dual embodiment—aural and visual—Karol Berger persuasively argues for an encompassing picture of language, a two-sided function which is adequate to referential, scientific use (by way of conceptual sign) as well as self-presenting, artistic use (by way of sensuous symbol):

The relative indifference of language to the specific material in which it is embodied must surely be linked to its referentiality. Words, whether spoken or written, refer to concepts. [...]

It must be noted, though, that this apparent independence [of language from the specific sense modality its material addresses] comes to a steep price. It is, namely, the more complete, the more we suppress the nonreferential aspect of language. [...] Any actual use of language involves not only *reference*, but also the *self-presentation* of the speaking subject. Now it is precisely this function of self-presentation that gets suppressed when we think of language as completely independent from the specific material, aural or visual, in which it is embodied. For the referential function, the actual embodiment of the sign(ifier) may not matter. For the self-presenting function, a translation from one embodiment into another always matters and sometimes it may be fatal (that is, impossible). [...] Music *is* what would get reduced in such cases, what gets lost in translation. And while we can get away with disregarding the self-presenting function of language in some of its uses, in science, for instance, we certainly cannot afford it when language becomes an artistic medium. Here the difference between language in general and literature in particular [...] becomes relevant.²⁰

For a proper understanding of language's full scope as a cultural medium, therefore, which ought necessarily to include the intrinsic artistic, literary dimension—an expression of our *felt* inner life and a representation of the *perceived* outer world—we are left again with the intimate relationship of word to its sound. Language has an aura of feeling, normally unaddressed (even unnoticed) as a means of ordinary communication, which is the province of writers and poets. Nowhere than in poetry is that union more important, indeed paramount; hence the harsh difficulties presented by poetic translation. 'Translators are to be matchmakers who exalt the great loveliness of a half-veiled beauty: they kindle an irresistible longing for the original', pronounced the German poet Goethe.²¹ This 'longing for the original' in a poem—as living and creative images in our soul, whose source

²⁰ Karol BERGER, *A Theory of Art* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 40, 42.

²¹ Johann Wolfgang von GOETHE, *Maxims and Reflections*, translated by Elisabeth Stopp, edited by Peter Hutchinson (London, Penguin Books, 1998), no. 299 [1825].

of energy emanated from religious cult and still nourished presocratic philosophy—dovetails with its musical sound.

Translation is a linguistic exchange (etymologically, a *transference*) where one has to find a point of commerce between different grammars. Yet communication, the imparting of information, is not the essential goal for an apt translation of a literary work. Great difficulties arise usually not from the meaning conveyed ('what'), but from the way it is conveyed ('how'), not plain transposition of equivalent terms (synonyms), but subtle modulation of different shades (metonyms), primarily connected with their peculiar cultural resonance and the workings of our musical mind, such as the sentence's rhythmic flux or the word's sound value.²² The nature of poetry, of course, lends itself less easily to translation, as compared to philosophy, for instance, let alone to scientific communication. And the same also happens with advertisement, whose enticing means for the purpose of selling (both in the literal meaning of having goods up for sale and the figurative meaning, an English idiom, of persuading prospective customers) are tailor-made according to peculiar cultural values and sound qualities. It is sufficient to recall only Pessoa's insidious slogan of 1929 for the Coca-Cola promotional campaign: 'Primeiro estranha-se, depois entranha-se' [first, it feels strange; then it takes root, or embeds].²³ How lame, how truly awkward, is the literal correspondence of the English rendering!

Carefully crafted also are Pessoa's heteronyms, fine-tuning the master's given and family names, Alberto Caeiro, to forge his disciples' corresponding sonorities: Álvaro de Campos and Ricardo Reis. Significantly, as regards the number of syllables of their personal names (respectively thirteen, eleven and fifteen), the first stands equidistant to the last two, their arithmetical mean. Moreover, thirteen matches the real-name poet's birthday.²⁴ Likewise with the pseudonym of

²² Three excellent, truly inspiring essays on the theme of translation are worth mentioning here: Walter BENJAMIN, 'The Task of the Translator' [1923], in *Illuminations*, translated by Harry Zohn, edited by Hannah Arendt (New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1968); George STEINER, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1975); Paul RICOEUR, *On Translation* [2004], translated by Eileen Brennan, introduction by Richard Kearney (London - New York, Routledge, 2006).

²³ Forbidden at that time in Portugal, this American brand (a pioneer in globalization) would be first marketed there only on the 4 July 1977 (Independence Day of the United States), a date as well as a metonymy.

²⁴ Fernando Pessoa was born in Lisbon on 13 June 1889. Like so many other artists, so often in the case of musicians, he was very fond (*quasi*-superstitious) of number symbolism. An accomplished astrologer, he meticulously defined the character of his heteronyms and chartered the life course for each one of them as much as for himself. The number thirteen seems to be no mere a 'coincidence' of measure and meaning in his multifarious personality (and multilayered work). A cursory glance through his life chronology on a dedicated website <casafernandopessoa.cm-lisboa.pt> (accessed 12 February 2016) would suffice. On the day 13 his grandfather was born (February 1813), then married (February 1844), and his father died (July 1893); he arrived in Lisbon with his family, coming from South Africa (September 1901), and his best friend, the poet Mário Sá-Carneiro, left for Paris (October 1912). Let us now shift from life to work. Alberto Caeiro is born at 13h45 (16 April 1889), and Álvaro de Campos at 13h30; the monarchic Ricardo Reis leaves in exile to Brazil (13 February 1919); Álvaro de Campos writes 'Anniversary' [...] on his last birthday (October 1929); writes to Adolfo Casais Monteiro the famous letter on the genesis of his heteronyms (January 1935); writes 'Vivem em nós inúmeros' (*Countless lives inhabit us*), the last dated poem of Ricardo Reis.

another major Portuguese poet, Miguel Torga, christened Adolfo Rocha. In addition to this alchemical transmutation from 'rock' to 'heather', a deep symbolic imagery pregnant with meaning, one can sense a metrical modulation of the forenames, changing from an amphibrach *Adolfo* to iambic *Miguel* and thereby carving his pen name to a mirror-image symmetrical pattern (*Miguel Torga*) whose closing syllables (the consonance of the guttural *g*) are still in phonetic agreement.

Now, the name 'Tristan' has been associated with a Latinized *triste* (meaning 'sad') by medieval hagiographers, presumably in order to find an etymological resonance that would define his tragic character and fate.²⁵ But while the adjective (a qualitative modifier common to old French) seems to characterize the personage's nature—his *voice*—its Portuguese translation, 'Tristão', further adds in degree to that aura of sorrow a traditional augmentative suffix (masculine -*ão*). Within the sounds of a word we may thus experience the immediate feeling for its meaning: the word is both sign and symbol. Augmentatives for Rousseau, as well as diminutives (e.g. *-inho* as in 'tristinho'), are likewise features of the first (natural) language. Such, then, is our (Portuguese) way of intoning the name of Wagner's legendary hero.

Developmental Coda: Truth & Beauty

If indeed the sounds of speech make us humans, for they are permeated with the meaning of our thought, it is only by way of our thinking—either reflective or creative—that truth can actually be sought and acquired. The laws of thinking appear to correspond with the universal order: art and knowledge, or beauty and truth, should flow from the same deep source in the human being—its inner life—according to leading nineteenth-century personalities in literature and music such as Goethe and Wagner. 'Beauty', Goethe said in a solemn tone, 'is a manifestation of secret natural laws which without this appearance would have remained eternally hidden from us', while Wagner heard in Beethoven's great string quartet in C sharp minor, op. 131, 'the direct revelation from another [divine] world'.²⁶ A musician like Beethoven, 'the true representative musician' for Wagner, 'ever resembles one truly possessed; for to him may be applied Schopenhauer's saying of the musician in general: "he expresses the highest wisdom in a language his reason does not understand"'.²⁷ Thus both Goethe and Wagner genuinely felt those mysterious revelations through art, the great masterworks, as acting on them with the force of necessity and imbuing their feelings

²⁵ See Roger SCRUTON, *Death-Devoted Heart: Sex and the Sacred in Wagner's Tristan and Isolde* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 15.

²⁶ GOETHE, *Maxims and Reflections* (see note 21), no. 183 [1823]. Richard WAGNER, *Beethoven* [1870], translated by William Ashton Ellis; *Richard Wagner Prose Works*, vol. 5: 'Actors and Singers' (London, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co, 1896; reprint, New York, Broude Brothers, 1966), p. 96.

²⁷ WAGNER, *Beethoven* (see note 26), p. 83.

with a perception of truth, in face of which all merely intellectual power is helpless. Through this sort of clairvoyant imagination, or *cognitive feeling*, we sense in art a yearning for the higher, something with intrinsic value and perennial life. ‘We do not understand art’, concludes Rudolf Steiner, ‘if we do not sense in it the longing to experience the spiritual at least in the revelation of beautiful appearance’.²⁸

Now, music addresses and is most comprehensible to the immediately sensitive realm of feelings—not private feelings, of course, but ‘speaking’ entities through which we perceive—and such imaginative cognition allows us to grasp a deep level of consciousness, lower and much less clear than our ordinary, conceptual consciousness. However, if the life of our feelings arises out of the depths of consciousness in a sort of sleeplike condition, it nevertheless possesses a wisdom of its own, a wisdom more difficult to fathom than that of our thoughts, lying beneath our conscious mind. Through imaginative, feeling cognition—a truly developed inner life to ‘think’ in living pictures, not only abstract ideas—music may be fully expressed and experienced, while proper theory must duly bring that knowledge to clear, daylight consciousness. Is not truth, after all, the goal of any artistic theory of art? Still, it ought to be found between abstract theory and dissected artwork. Such artistic truths, both creative and reflective, are indeed substantially different from purely intellectual or else mathematical truths. There is something vital in art which eludes pure logical understanding; the reality of an intuitive artistic experience lives in the wings of human feeling. Yet one should be reminded that, in the realm of art, the fundamental concern is not only to portray the beautiful one-sidedly, for in the real world it always interplays with the ugly. We are actually engaged in a battle, a fierce one, between beauty and ugliness: its depiction is by its very nature art. Hence the aesthetic (and cognitive) battle between dissonance and consonance in the world. Our real task must be, therefore, to seek harmony between them.

We should then *listen* to truth—which reaches inwardly into the innermost recesses of our being—as being in consonance with reality, even a heraldic, anticipatory reality of a social kind, as has been put forward by French economic theorist Jacques Attali in a challenging essay ‘on the political economy of music’. His aural thesis is thus stated at the outset, with eloquent and most emblematic words, which he then develops into the epistemic value of music and the perceptive rationale of its unique, prophetic nature:

²⁸ Rudolf STEINER, *The Inner Nature of Music and the Experience of Tone* [1922], translated by Maria St. Goar, edited by Alice Wulsin (Hudson - N.Y., Anthroposophic Press, 1983), p. 43. Developed from Goethe’s integrated approach to art and science, which emphasizes the indispensable role of imagination in all knowing, Steiner’s understanding of the nature of art as well as epistemological model shall be followed here, at times paraphrased.

For twenty-five centuries, Western knowledge has tried to look upon the world. It has failed to understand that the world is not for the beholding. It is for hearing. It is not legible, but audible. [...] Music is more than an object of study: it is a way of perceiving the world. A tool of understanding. Today, no theorizing accomplished through language or mathematics can suffice any longer; it is incapable of accounting for what is essential in time — the qualitative and the fluid, threats and violence. [...]

Music is prophecy. Its styles and economic organization are ahead of the rest of society because it explores, much faster than material reality can, the entire range of possibilities in a given code. It makes audible the new world that will gradually become visible, that will impose itself and regulate the order of things; it is not only the image of things, but the transcending of the everyday, the herald of the future.²⁹

For a complete understanding of reality and the human nature, the world and society, we must therefore include our musical insights and perspectives; such is the real cognitive significance of music. Music (and art at large) is itself part of the world's intrinsic truth; without it, the world is in great sense incomplete. Perhaps, then, our vocal organs of singing and speech—notably the larynx, hidden within the 'Adam's apple' (quite a symbolic expression), and the vocal cords—have been attuned to the opening harmonies of spiritual music, the music of the spheres, a divine force which pours itself and resonates through the cosmos, ordering all things according to measure, number and weight. Today, indeed, only in the realm of mathematics, as our instincts and desires are silenced, do we seem to recognize universally the lofty goal of truth. Now, can this path to human unity and mutual understanding (a herald, too, for justice and love) also be achieved *subjectively*—for it is still based on phenomena, whose outer form reveals their inwardness, i.e. dependent on transitory perceptible processes and partial experience—with our personal *voice*, namely in music? For music speaks, of course, otherwise it would not be music. It speaks *from* and *to* the immediate realm of feeling, subtly approached by that sort of clairvoyant cognition championed by the Romantics.

Quite different theoretical arguments, we have seen, have been made in favor of each side of the dual conception of the *logos*—either mathematics or language, Pythagoras' *reason* or Aristoxenus' *sense*—regarding the nature of music and its relation to the world. These again are some of the fundamental questions Claude Palisca asked in his final study on the relationship between music as a branch of knowledge and the intellectual background at the time of a great turning point in Europe's history and European music, *videlicet* the transition from the Renaissance to the Baroque:

²⁹ Jacques ATTALI, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music* [1977], translated by Brian Massumi (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1985), pp. 3-4, 11.

How music relates to the world at large has perennially fascinated philosophers and musicians. Is music a reflection of a universal harmony ruled by numbers? Is its appreciation a step in the ascent to the ultimate truth, a knowledge of God? Is it a wordless language that speaks the ineffable, a natural medium to express emotion, or an agent for moving the affections? Is it an imitation of nature, as is said of some other arts? Or is it simply a gift to humankind for our delight and to relieve us of boredom and care? Music was each of these things to some author during the period covered by this book.³⁰

Symptomatically, it was against the frivolous, decadent notion that music was solely a source of entertainment that both theoretical camps rallied. Taking turns, each would charge the previous one on unmistakable ethical grounds, redefining the line between them and taking a strong stance against the other (previous) model. Truth has always been music's ongoing, albeit ever changing, claim and aspiration: an intense feeling for *truth*, an ideal of knowledge, especially coupled with the moral value of *goodness* and a sense of artistic *beauty*. Such is the spiritual, divine triad in concrete reality, not merely empty words, the sublime nature and lofty goal of all human endeavor. In the classical idea of 'isomorphic resonance'³¹ inherited from the ancient world lied the nature, or essence, of music as a sensuous embodiment of the immutable (cosmic) harmony and its power, or effect, to represent changeable (human) passions and thus edify our character. Boethius, the authoritative influence in music theory throughout the Middle Ages, writes at the beginning of his early sixth-century treatise *De institutione musica* on such a distinctive feature and singular role of music as a liberal art:

From this [both the scrutiny of the mind to know the truth and the judgment of the ear to ennoble or corrupt the character] it follows that, since there happen to be four mathematical disciplines, the other three [arithmetic, geometry and astronomy] share with music the task of searching for truth; but music is associated not only with speculation but with morality as well.³²

³⁰ Claude V. PALISCA, *Music and Ideas in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Urbana - Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 2006), p. 13.

³¹ This is an apt term defined by Mark Evan BONDS, *Absolute Music: The History of an Idea* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 30: 'Pythagoreanism explains the effect of music as the product of what might be called isomorphic resonance: the ratios that govern the intervals of music are the same ratios that govern the structure of the universe at every level, from that of the individual human to that of the cosmos as a whole'. It is also the title of chapter 2.

³² Ancius Manlius Torquatus Severinus BOETHIUS, *Fundamentals of Music* [c. 500], translated by Calvin M. Bower, edited by Claude V. Palisca (New Haven - London, Yale University Press, 1989), p. 2.

This encompassing unity of the nature *and* power of music was eroded over time, as the ethical power became just an effect of its essentially harmonic nature—a ‘concordant’ proportion, i.e. intervallic consonant, expressed in numerical ratios. By the mid-sixteenth century, the perfecting of classical polyphony seems to have progressed so far as to have reached its ultimate goal of the *ars perfecta*, in the lapidary words of Swiss humanist and music theorist Glareanus: ‘the perfect art to which nothing can be added and after which only decline can be expected’.³³ Now, theoretical conservatism, even pedantry, would naturally ensue, leading Bolognese music theorist Giovanni Maria Artusi (a student of Gioseffo Zarlino, the foremost theorist since Classical Antiquity) fiercely to attack some madrigals by Claudio Monteverdi (even before they were published) on harmonic grounds alone. Quite telling is that, in his analyses of Monteverdi’s novel treatment of dissonance, Artusi omits the poems altogether.³⁴ Truth, however, and beauty were to be found elsewhere: melody will now convey the passions of the words and carry the expressive content of a composition. On such ambivalent grounds, and eventually switching camps, music finds its place also among the literary disciplines of the academic *trivium* (grammar, dialectic and rhetoric), along with those of the mathematical *quadrivium* (arithmetic, geometry and astronomy),³⁵ that is, rather than a deductive science of harmonic proportions inherited from medieval or scholastic tradition, music becomes an expressive art of poetic import developed from the mighty humanist impulse of the Renaissance. ‘In the new practice’, as Gary Tomlinson summarizes, ‘the composer’s first concern was expressive force, not structural perfection’.³⁶ However, ‘the modern composer [of the new *stile rappresentativo*] builds on foundations of truth’, Monteverdi pledged when responding to Artusi.³⁷ His brother Giulio Cesare later emphasized this argument in a ‘declaration’ on the *seconda prattica*, which would resound for decades in avant-garde manifestos.

³³ Heinrich GLAREAN, *Dodecachordon* (Basel, Heinrich Petri, 1547; reprint, New York, Broude Brothers, 1967), bk. 3, chapter 13, p. 241; ‘[Ars perfecta] cui ut nihil addi potest, ita nihil ei quam Senium tandem expectandum’, translation, transcription, and commentary by Clement A. Miller, *Musicological Studies and Documents*, vol. 6 (Rome, American Institute of Musicology, 1965).

³⁴ For a survey of this epoch-making dispute, see Claude V. PALISCA, ‘The Artusi-Monteverdi Controversy’, in *The New Monteverdi Companion*, edited by Dennis Arnold and Nigel Fortune (London, Faber and Faber, 1985), pp. 127-58.

³⁵ In 1586 Giulio del Bene, one of the founders of the *Accademia degli Alterati* in Florence, delivered an oration there to propose that music should transfer from the *quadrivium* to the *trivium*. See Claude V. PALISCA, ‘The Alterati of Florence, Pioneers in the Theory of Dramatic Music’, in *New Looks at Italian Opera: Essays in Honor of Donald J. Grout*, edited by William W. Austin (Ithaca - N.Y., Cornell University Press, 1968), pp. 14-5.

³⁶ Gary TOMILSON, *Monteverdi and the End of the Renaissance* (Berkeley - Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1987), p. 23. For a compared perspective of the late sixteenth-century polemics in Italian culture over science, literature and music, see chapter 1: ‘Oppositions in Late Renaissance Thought: Three Case Studies’.

³⁷ Claudio and Giulio Cesare MONTEVERDI, ‘Explanation of the Letter Printed in the Fifth Book of Madrigals’ [1605; 1607], in *Strunk’s Source Readings in Music History*, revised edition, edited by Leo Treitler (New York, W. W. Norton, 1998), pp. 536-44, at p. 543.

My brother says that he does not compose his works by chance because, in this kind of music, it has been his intention to make the words the mistress of the harmony and not the servant, and because it is in this manner that his work is to be judged in the composition of the ‘melody’. [...]

For such reasons, he [my brother Claudio] has called it ‘second’ and not ‘new’, and he has called it ‘practice’ and not ‘theory’, because he understands its explanation to turn on the manner of employing the consonances and dissonances in actual composition.³⁸

Most bitterly contested in this momentous controversy was indeed the treatment of dissonance: no longer merely a threat to acceptable mathematical proportions, it now becomes a forceful expressive means subservient to the words and the passions they conveyed—the worthy source of inspiration and aesthetic goal of music. Such a radical new development, a *dramatic* shift which gave birth to opera, marked the arrival of modernity in European music.

Conversely, what succeeded was a *metaphysical* shift at the turn of the nineteenth century, another pivotal moment of our modern consciousness, as music was felt now to reach beyond language. It is interesting to observe such a radical transition symmetrically arranged around the year 1800: in the context of Enlightenment rationalism, the philosopher Kant considered instrumental music ‘admittedly more a matter of enjoyment than of culture’ (1790), whereas in the context of Romantic idealism, the writer E.T.A. Hoffmann perceived in Beethoven’s instrumental music ‘the pain of infinite yearning’, which ‘unveils before us [...] and irresistibly sweeps the listener into the wonderful spirit realm of the infinite’.³⁹ Rather than the conventional ‘language of emotions’, a kind of inarticulate speech with indefinite ideas, music would be the privileged medium for the early Romantics in their quest for truth: *infinity*, that is, an unknown realm inaccessible to language, the *absolute*. A complete reversal is thereby accomplished as to their aesthetic value, language and music, and respective rank among the fine arts. For Kant, because ‘it speaks through nothing but sensations without concepts’, all music not set to words (i.e. non-representational and self-subsistent) ‘has the lowest place among the fine arts’.⁴⁰ For Hoffmann, instead, when ‘music is spoken of as an independent art [...] [i]t is the most romantic of all arts—one might almost say the only one that is *purely* romantic’.⁴¹ In short, ‘free beauty (*pulchritudo vaga*)’ of the former kind was metamorphosed into ‘the philosopher’s miraculous elixir’ (the

³⁸ MONTEVERDI, ‘Explanation of the Letter’ (see note 37), pp. 538, 540.

³⁹ Immanuel KANT, *The Critique of Judgment* [1790], translated by Werner S. Pluhar; with a foreword by Mary J. Gregor (Indianapolis, Hackett Publishing Company, 1987), 328, p. 199; HOFFMANN, ‘Review of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony’ (see note 7), pp. 238-9.

⁴⁰ KANT, *The Critique of Judgment* (see note 39), pp. 198-9, pp. 328-29,

⁴¹ HOFFMANN, ‘Review of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony’ (see note 7), p. 236.

wonderful *sublime*) of the latter kind.⁴² Such indeed was a radically new perspective of purely instrumental music as a mode of thinking and knowing, a thorough reappraisal of its absolute nature and magical power, whose epistemological premises Mark Evan Bonds scrutinizes in due historical context:

The new paradigm of listening that emerged out of the aesthetics of idealism around 1800 abandoned the premise that music was a language. The musical work was perceived no longer as an oration, but rather as an object of contemplation, a potential catalyst of revelation accessible to those who actively engaged the work by listening with creative imagination, with *Einbildungskraft*. Rather than try to eliminate the unknowable, the Romantics embraced it as a fundamental basis of knowledge. [...] They used the essential inaccessibility of the Absolute as the basis for a new system of knowledge that suspended reality between the material and ideal.

The new approach rested on the belief that truth—the Absolute—could be best comprehended (insofar as it could be comprehended at all) through example rather than through explanation. The new vehicle of philosophy was no longer the discursive treatise based on reductive logic, but the work of art.⁴³

‘For the less philosophically inclined’, however, Berger sharply observes, ‘the metaphysical and the religious dimensions could be closely intertwined. For Hoffmann himself, metaphysics seems to have been the religion of the post-Christian age. [...] But Beethoven’s symphony appears already to be the Palestrina Mass for the times when Christianity no longer shines in all its glory; the new revelation of ‘the other world’, the realm of the spirit’.⁴⁴ Music comes home again, if only to find another venue: it first ‘music migrated from the church to the theater’,⁴⁵ then to the concert hall.

This is the half-millenary course of events taken by Western art music in its relentless pursuit of truth since the early fourteenth-century *ars nova*. Quite different approaches to musical truth have been developed; better, perhaps, different aspects of truth pertaining to the realm (or element) of music have been expressed and revealed. There was a time, a three-century period up to 1600, when vocal polyphony (increasingly perfected) was governed essentially by the idea of embodied cosmic *harmony*. Then, in the following centuries up to 1800, music’s ethical call was to represent

⁴² KANT, *The Critique of Judgment* (see note 39), p. 76; HOFFMANN, ‘Review of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony’ (see note 7), p. 236.

⁴³ Mark Evan BONDS, *Music as Thought: Listening to the Symphony in the Age of Beethoven* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2006), pp. 93; 111-2.

⁴⁴ BERGER, *A Theory of Art* (see note 20), pp. 136-7.

⁴⁵ HOFFMANN, ‘Old and New Church Music’ [1814] (see note 7), p. 366.

human *passions* through a chain of imitation leading all the way from the poet and the composer to the singer and the listener. Eventually, the last century of mainstream tonal music up to 1900, that of Wagner, acutely felt in *absolute* ('pure') music an intimation from a sublime world—be it Hoffmann's *infinite*, Schopenhauer's *will*, Kierkegaard's *sensuous-erotic* or Nietzsche's *Dionysian*. This threefold evolution of Western tonal consciousness, elapsed in *accelerando* ever-shorter time spans, appears to describe a broad U-shaped metaphysical gesture in cross profile: first descending from the highest spheres of cosmic existence; then projecting 'down here' toward the souls of fellow humans; finally ascending again to the ineffable realm of the human spirit. Music goes back along the very path by which it has come, although more *conscious* of itself and ever more *individually*. Not coincidentally, this triadic evolution of tonal consciousness—descent from the spirit, life in matter and return to the spirit—appears homologous in historical microcosm with the meaning of the inaudible cosmic Sound: the three-letter AUM.

Like everything else in the real world—be it beauty, goodness or evolution—truth exists as a two-sidedness, between two polarities. 'He who begins by loving Christianity more than Truth', warns the English Romantic poet Coleridge, 'will proceed by loving his sect or church better than Christianity, and even in loving himself better than all'.⁴⁶ Cautioning against self-enclosure, this well known, often-quoted aphorism points directly to one of the fundamental polarities of truth: *egoism* (as opposed to relativism) is a imprisoning force which we ought to brush aside in order to reach truth. Of course, no single, all-embracing truth is meant here; instead, our genuine, earnest striving to identify with that lofty ideal. Now Goethe, in turn, another great literary figure of the time, focuses on *creative* (as opposed to reflective) thinking: 'Was fruchtbar ist, allein ist wahr' ['true is alone what fertile is'].⁴⁷ Yes, truth is indeed a stern goddess, as often has been symbolically expressed; yet she speaks *and* sings through manifold tones and with multifarious voices. Hence art's special ability, notably in music and literature, to portray the subtle intertwining of different voices and characters; and, again, the task of a true theory of art to elicit therefrom living concepts and ideas, so that we might be able to experience *and* know our way around in full, daylight consciousness. That is the case of the late René Girard, who has drawn a comprehensive cultural theory of the 'mimetic desire' out of his readings of the major novels from Cervantes to Dostoyevsky, thus accounting for a psychological evolution of the modern individual. Assuming an

⁴⁶ Samuel Taylor COLERIDGE, *Aids to Reflection in the Formation of a Manly Character on the Several Grounds of Prudence, Morality and Religion* [1825], 'Moral and Religious Aphorisms', no. 25, edited by John Beer, *Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, Bollingen Series 75 (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 107.

⁴⁷ Line from the poem *Vermaechtness* (Bequest), translated in Paul CARUS, *Goethe: With Special Consideration of His Philosophy* (Chicago, The Open Court Publishing Company, 1915), pp. 243-4.

actual awareness by major artists, embodied in their great masterpieces and often intuitive, his theoretical voice unraveled a real knowledge of the laws of the human mind.⁴⁸

Language, too, has a double face, like the ancient Roman god Janus, as a mediation to truth and reality, or else deception and escape from reality (say, in virtual reality). ‘Language is, for Coleridge’, in regard to the idea of the ascent of the mind, ‘a living power which enables men to improve their vision of the truth’.⁴⁹ To be sure, something like a genius lives deep hidden at the core of language that leads beyond it to something higher, thereby fostering a sense of *universality* and uniting us with all our fellow human beings. At the same time, the language with which we grow up and confront the world, think and feel—our own mother tongue, besides the human faculty of speech—definitely influences our inner life by way of specific modes of thought, working in the subconsciousness as if it had a *will* of its own. Its configuration somehow defines the national character of a people that share a common language and accompanies the changes in feelings and perceptions of the folk soul, its evolution and metamorphoses. Certainly the harmony, or attunement, between the sound-content of a word and its concept-feeling element is different in the case of a foreign language, inducing in us a quite different sensitive response to it than our own. Poets, in particular, are most sensitive to this spiritual life revealed in concrete matter, for they perceive the full sense of sound in language, its conceptual as well as feeling (or emotional) qualities. How fascinatingly and truly does one speak of *undertones* in language, an essential musical feature which refers to shades of meaning lying an octave below the actual pitch of the sound uttered. Thus we can assess the crucial importance for Pessoa, who made a living as a translator and nearly became an English writer while living in South Africa, of eventually deciding on the first poetic language with which to express himself with full awareness. His epigrammatic, almost mythic motto, ‘A minha pátria é a língua portuguesa’ [my homeland is the Portuguese language], rings ever since in our cultural imaginary.

Still, Pessoa’s poetic voice—indeed *voices*—are important in another way as we try to grasp the notion of truth, whose recognition must always involve our active cooperation. His full-fledged *personae*, writer and translator Richard Zenith recalls, epitomize the requirement that truth must always be approached from multiple and diverse viewpoints: ‘Famous for splitting himself into a

⁴⁸ René GIRARD, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel* [1961], translated by Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965). A parallel has been established between Girard’s theory of *mimetic desire* concerning the modern novel in literature and my theory of *harmonic modulation* concerning the tonal system in music. See Miguel RIBEIRO-PEREIRA, ‘The Evolution of Consciousness as Expressed in Tone: An East-West Approach’, in *Images of Europe: Past, Present, Future. ISSEI 2014 – Conference Proceedings*, edited by Yolanda Espiña (Porto, Universidade Católica Editora, 2016), pp. 874-82.

⁴⁹ Douglas HEDLEY, *Coleridge, Philosophy and Religion: Aids to Reflection and the Mirror of the Spirit* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 117.

multitude of literary alter egos he dubbed “heteronyms”—more than mere pseudonyms, since he endowed them with biographies, religious and political views, and diverse writing styles—Pessoa claimed that he, within that self-generated universe, was the least real person of all’.⁵⁰ Without resorting to such astrological wizardry, Romantic composer Robert Schumann (born, incidentally, under the sign of Gemini like Pessoa and Wagner) would also display a *polyphony* of contrasting fictional characters in his piano cycles, namely, *Carnaval* op. 9, with well-defined features albeit in a fragmentary style. And thus we turn again to the question of the *individual* voice as an inescapable path to truth, though naturally embedded in the specific cultural dimension of one’s linguistic environment.

Com que voz? [with what voice?] is the self-questioning phrase that sets off a sonnet by Camões, to which the Queen of Fado, Amália Rodrigues, lends a splendid vocal interpretation, lingering on a deep reciting tone in minor mode. I wonder now, while paying a fellow countryman tribute in a foreign language, what might be my cultural voice as the speaker presented here: *vox lusitana vel portugalensis?*

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⁵⁰ PESSOA, *A Little Larger Than the Entire Universe* (see note 4), p. xiii.